

Date of Hearing: April 17, 2012

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Marty Block, Chair

AB 2462 (Block) – As Amended: April 9, 2012

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: academic credit for prior military academic experience.

SUMMARY: Requires the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to implement a process for awarding credit for prior military experience and encourages CCCs to facilitate the acceptance of credits for prior military academic experience, as specified.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the CCC Chancellor to implement a process for awarding credit for prior military academic experience, to be completed no later than July 1, 2013, that meets the pertinent standards of the American Council on Education (ACE).
- 2) Encourages CCCs to recognize prior military academic experience and award credit where appropriate, which may include the use of the ACE standards or other appropriate system that offers a consistent and reasonable method of recognizing that learning.
- 3) Encourages the CCC Academic Senate to develop recommendations regarding approaches to the use of systems, including but not limited to the ACE system, that provide guidance for awarding college credit for academic instruction and experience in a military setting.
- 4) Encourages CCCs to consider military education and or experience for credit for career technical education instruction and develop ways to evaluate progress to, or completion of, a professional or occupational certificate.
- 5) States that CCCs may also use the credit by exam process to award college credit for experience or instruction gained in a military setting.
- 6) Creates a reimburseable state mandate if so determined by the Commission on State Mandates.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes a matriculation process at CCCs with the purpose of realizing a student's educational objectives. Matriculation services to be made available by the colleges include, but are not limited to (a) processing of admission applications, (b) orientation and pre-orientation services concerning academic expectations and financial assistance, and (c) assessment and counseling upon enrollment, as specified. (Education Code § 78212)
- 2) Requires the California State University (CSU) and CCC to grant priority registration for enrollment to former members of the Armed Forces of the United States within four years of leaving active military duty. (EC § 66025.8)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: This bill is double-referred to the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee.

Background. In California, an approximate 30,000 troops annually are leaving service, and many are pursuing education. Student veteran enrollment has increased at the University of California (UC), CSU, and CCC in recent years: CCC enrolls 44,000 students who utilize some form of veteran tuition/fee benefit, while CSU enrolls 6,540 and UC enrolls 949 students who are using GI benefits. Approximately 90% of UC and CSU student veterans transferred from a CCC campus.

Recent hearing on student veteran issues. On February 28, 2012, the Assembly Higher Education and Assembly Veterans Affairs Committees held a joint oversight hearing on the challenges facing California student veterans. Several students and representatives from the higher education institutions spoke for the need for more resources for veterans' services, including more transition assistance, improving outreach and campus-based programs, and easing the matriculation of prior military learning.

Need for this bill. According to the author, it is unclear the extent to which CCCs are equally evaluating prior service as it relates to academic credit. Recent budget cuts have made this task even more challenging for campuses. Thus, this bill requires the Chancellor's Office to develop a process for awarding this credit, for example, matching CCC common course descriptors with the ACE Guide standards.

ACE Guide. The military issues academic transcripts for active-duty service members and veterans. The transcripts issued by the various service branches are endorsed and periodically evaluated by ACE and bear its seal. ACE also provides recommendations to colleges for evaluating these transcripts. The Guide's credit transfer recommendations are based on reviews of military coursework by a panel of university faculty members convened by ACE. These faculty members review military coursework and occupational training descriptions pertaining to their own academic disciplines, evaluating them according to disciplinary standards and expectations.

UC and CSU have recently adopted the ACE standards for evaluating prior military academic credit. In spring 2011, the CCC statewide Academic Senate passed a resolution urging local senates to apply credit for educational experiences during military service toward the associate degree in accordance with the recommendations listed in the ACE Guide.

CCC recognition of prior learning. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent prior learning experiences receive academic credit at CCC, since the determinations are made at each campus, but it appears that the application of prior learning credit is uneven. At present, 46 CCCs are members of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Consortium, which require member institutions to, among other things, provide credit for military training and experience, including use of the ACE Guide in evaluating and awarding academic credit for military training and experience.

CCC budget cuts. The CCC matriculation program is currently in a state of transition due to significant funding cuts in recent years and legislative budget language allowing districts flexibility in implementing program mandates. According to the Manpower Demonstration

Research Corporation (MDRC, 2010), counselor-to-student ratios of 1 to 1,000 or more are not uncommon at CCC campuses.

Transferability of credit for prior learning experiences. While faculty at a CCC may grant academic credit for prior learning experiences, this does not ensure that these courses will transfer to a four-year institution. Faculty at the receiving institution determines whether prior learning credits are accepted by that institution. This issue could be considered by the CCC and CSU faculty who are implementing SB 1440 (Padilla), Chapter 428, Statutes of 2010, which statutorily prescribes the content of a community college degree that meets transfer eligibility requirements.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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